School education is primarily the concern of the State Governments. However, a number of schemes have been formulated by the Central Government for development of school education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system and to provide quality basic education all over the country. The scheme gives special focus for the education of girls, scheduled castes and tribal children. The scheme also seeks to provide at least a 1:40 teacher-pupil ratio with at least 50 per cent of teachers as women. In addition to new schools, classrooms and infrastructural support the scheme, under its Education Guarantee Scheme/ Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS/AIE) component, provides for alternative schools to cover unserved habitations. A National Programme of Nutritional Support for Primary Education (commonly known as the Mid-day Meal Scheme) has been launched for improving student attendance while raising their nutritional standard. As far as the Central Government is concerned, for the Secondary and Senior Secondary levels, Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas have been set up in different parts of the country. The scheme of Vocalionalisation of Secondary Education is being revised to prepare students for identified occupations where self or wage employment opportunities are available.

Minarets of Taj Mahal

*71. SHRI R.P. GOENKA:
SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that all the four minarets of the Taj Mahal at Agra have been tilting for many years;

(b) if so, the details of the surveys made from time to time to assess the structural safety of the Taj and its minarets;

(c) the action taken or being taken to overcome any threat to the world heritage monument;

(d) whether it is also a fact the U.N.E.S.C.O. has also expressed concern on the likely damage to the Taj; and

(e) if so, the results of any coordination established with the World Heritage Centre at Paris?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPALREDDY): (a) No, Sir.

The studies conducted by the Survey of India and various other agencies about the verticality of minarets of the Taj Mahal at Agra indicate very insignificant deviation from the perpendicular which indicate that all the four minarets are quite stable in plan as well as elevation.

(b) Various institutions/organizations have conducted surveys from time to time to assess the structural safety of the Taj and its minarets which include:—

(i) Survey for the verticality of the minarets since 1940 at different intervals by the Survey of India.

(ii) Studies related to stress analysis, building materials, Geo-technical aspects and safety against seismic forces by University of Roorkee, Department of Civil Engineering and Department of Earthquake Engineering from 1989 to 1991.

(iii) Studies for Geophysical aspects and stability by National Geophysical Research Institute Hyderabad in 1993.

(c) There is no threat to the structural stability of the monument. Every care is being taken for regular maintenance and repairs of the minarets and monument.

(d) No, Sir. No concern for any damage to the monument has been expressed by the UNESCO.

(e) Does not arise.

Live shells in imported scrap

*72. SHRI, S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scrap imported from Iraq and shipped to India through Iran with live shells caused blast at a Ghaziabad factory leading to ten deaths; and

(b) if so, the action proposed against the suppliers and the importers for importing lethal consignments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) The consignment of metal scrap imported by M/s Bhushan Steel & Strips Ltd. Ghaziabad, was allegedly responsible for the blast and death of 10 persons. This was